UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

FACTORS AFFECTING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF JHS STUDENTS IN THE

TECHIMAN MUNICIPALITY

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BY

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: ………………………….Date: ………………………

Name: Victoria Owusu-Kyeremaa

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertation laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature:……………………….Date………………….

Name: Dr Rosemary S. Bosu (Mrs)

ABSTRACT

It is universally accepted that one of the benefits of good education is that it enables individuals to contribute to the development and improvement in the quality of life for themselves, their communities and the nation as a whole. Though the Government of Ghana has initiated policies and interventions to increase enrolment, there are still children of school going age who are found roaming in the Techiman market during school hours. This study sought to investigate the factors that are likely to affect children's school attendance in the Municipality.

The study adopted a descriptive survey design and used questionnaire to collect data from 380 randomly selected respondents; 130 JHS Two students, 130 parents, 100 dropouts, 10 teachers and 10 head teachers.

The study found that poor school attendance and dropping out of school in the Techiman Municipality were influenced by low education background of parents, financial problems, teenage pregnancy, peer influence, as well as disobedience on the part of the students. Some parents even perceive their wards dropping out of school as a blessing in disguise, because it lessens their financial burden. Poor school attendance was also attributed to pupil's difficulty in understanding what is taught, the boring nature of school activities and unfriendly nature of school environment.

The study therefore recommends that parents should be educated on the importance of education so that they will show interest in their wards' education. It also recommends regular PTA meetings to discuss issues relating to school attendance and drop out rates.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

To my Late Mother, Paulina Kyeremaa, and my Uncle, Op. Kwabena Owusu who

saw me through my education

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

It is universally accepted that one of the benefits of good education is that it enables individuals to contribute to the development and improvement in the quality of life for themselves, their communities and the nation as a whole. The history of mankind has forged a strong link between education and national development. It is the primary means of bringing about change and development and also contributes to the economic development of a country.

Mac-William and Kwamena-Poh (1975) have stated that the main purpose of education whether formal or informal is to produce a person who will be a useful member of society. All over the world education is accepted as the process by which individuals acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes which enable them to develop their faculties in full. Harbison and Meyers (1964) also claim that the higher the level of educational development of a country, the greater the range of economic development. Herowitz (1960) commenting on the relationship between education and national development also stated that the higher the level of education of the work force, the greater their productivity.

In any organization, the combination of human efforts and material resources make such an organization realize her objectives. Jackson and McConnell (1988) buttressing this point have stated that the production of

goods and services involves the combination of labour, capital and entrepreneurship. Labour and entrepreneur are the human aspects of production while capital and land could be described as the material aspects.

According to Harbison (1973), human resources are the energies, skills, talents and knowledge of people, which are or potentially are capable of being applied in the production of useful services. Man clearly stands out as an active agent of production for the simple fact that, it is the applied knowledge, skills, talent and energies that make production possible. He becomes entrepreneur who combines all the factors of production (natural, physical, capital, income) to produce useful goods and services.

Human resources work on production of all kinds, social, cultural, political and economic development of nations. That is why Harbison sees human resources as "the wealth of nations". He argued that a country which is unable to develop the knowledge and skills of its people and utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else.

Education is believed to be a vehicle for social and economic transformation. It brings about social progress and economic development. On the social side, education modifies people's beliefs, customs and practices. It reduces poverty, diseases and ignorance, paving the way for modernity, civilization and good governance (Busia, 1968 as cited in Boateng, 2003). From the economic point of view, writers in economics and education indicate that there is a high correlation between the investment people and nations make in education and the level of economic development and the standard of living which the people enjoy (Harbison & Meyers 1964 cited in Boateng, 2003). This is because education equips people with knowledge, attitudes,

competencies, skills and technical know-how to enable them contribute meaningfully to the economic development and welfare of the society.

Education has been seen as the passing on of knowledge from one generation to the other to promote social stability and coherence as a means of passing on the values cherished in society and a way of initiating the individual into society. Education is thus viewed as an instrument for promoting and controlling change, for incorporation into rapidly changing national society typified by pluralism in relation to beliefs and roles and the individuals' attachment to one or many of these.

It is in view of the above that nations invest heavily in education to enable them provide basic education to the citizenry and also to train a body of skilled manpower to man the labour force with the aim of increasing national output. Ghana, like any of the developing and developed countries the world over, is aware of the importance of education to national development. It is believed that the Ghana Government devoted about 40% of its annual budget to education; this is in consideration of the importance of education in the country's development.

In a developed country like Britain education is considered as a tool that makes one useful to himself and the society. The Education Act of Britain (1944) has a principle that no parent has the right to deprive the child of the advantage of full time education. According to the Act of 1944, the main feature is to aim at completing the margining of the provision for the delinquent and non-delinquent children whilst creating a closer link between school, the social service and educational development. The Act led to the introduction of school attendance as a means of making parents and children

answerable for pupils' and students' non-attendance to school. Ghana, being a developing country, is no exception in education innovations. Successive governments of Ghana have sought to use education as the vehicle for accelerating the implementation of their development policies and programmes. She has, since independence and beyond, made significant strides in its educational system.

Consequently, governments adopted different policies to suit the changing times and to address the various needs of the people in the society. Some of the laws, policy documents and reports which have helped in meeting the educational needs and aspirations of the people are:

1. The Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) 1951

2. The Educational Act of 1961

3. The Dzobo Report of 1973

4. The New Structure and Content of Education of 1974

5. The Education Reform Programme of 1987/88

6. The Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Programme of 1966

7. Education for All (EFA) 2000

The Accelerated Development Plan and the 1961 Education Act made education fee-free and compulsory at the basic level. The 1987 Educational Reform was an integration of older policies and concerns with new educational thinking, leading to the formation of a comprehensive reform. This reform gave birth to the Junior Secondary School (JSS) and Senior Secondary School (SSS) concepts. The structure was made up of 6 years of Primary, 3 years of Junior Secondary and 3 years of Senior Secondary education. The aim was to make education accessible to all: that is, increase

access by making basic education available to every Ghanaian child of school going age; making Senior Secondary education available to 50% of the JHS graduates; and providing tertiary education to 25% of SHS graduates.

The government, realizing some lapses in the 1987 reform, came out with new intervention, (the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education) which was enshrined in the 1992 Constitution. The FCUBE Programme had a focus on primary education and seeks to improve upon the 1987 reform by addressing the shortcomings identified in the implementation process to ensure quality. The programme was launched in October 1996 and was aimed at increasing the participation of primary school going children so as to make it as close to 100% of the population as possible.

The Education for All was instituted in the year 2000 to remedy some of the shortfalls in the educational system. The EFA came into being as a result of a meeting of World Conference on education in Jomteim, Thailand in 1990. The main focus was the adoption of strategies to meet the learning needs of all children of school going age. A follow-up meeting was held ten years later in Dakar in April 2000. The meeting was attended by 164 countries including Ghana which adopted a framework for action which spelt out six (6) goals popularly known as "the six Dakar goals".

The Government and the wide sections of the public, especially parents, had serious reservations concerning certain aspects of the 1987 educational reforms: the many problems in the objectives, content, administration and the management. As a result a 29-member committee drawn from a cross section of stakeholders of the education sector headed by

Prof. Jophus Anamuah Mensah was inaugurated on 17th January, 2002 to review the existing education.

The committee came out with the following: The Universal Basic Education shall now be 11 years, made up of; 2 years of kindergarten, 6 years of Primary School, 3 years of Junior High School (JHS). Second Cycle 4 - year Senior High School (SHS), 4 - year courses in Technical, Vocational and Agriculture, 3 - year Teacher Training College (Diploma), 4 - year Tertiary (Report of Education Reform Review Committee, 2005). Greater emphasis was on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Science and Technology at almost all the levels, and that Special Needs Education will be improved at all levels (Report of Education Reform Review Committee, 2005).

Basic school pupils now enjoy Capitation Grant which makes it possible for poor children to attend school feely. Children in deprived districts enjoy the School Feeding Programme that is providing them with one meal a day. The new reform was inaugurated in April 2007 and will take off in September, 2007.

The objectives set for the achievement of good quality education and participation by all school going age children in the country as spelt out by educational reforms including the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) are very laudable. The government, through the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund), has provided infrastructural facilities to many districts all over the country. This has increased access to and participation in education. For example, according to Adamu-Issah, Elden, Forson, and Schrofer (2007),

"primary school enrolment rose from 79.5% in 1999 to 92.1% in 2005. A Government capitation grant scheme launched at the start of the September 2005 school year is estimated to have boosted the rate of primary enrolment by 9%. The primary school completion rate rose by over 5% between 2003 and 2004 to 78%. In 2005 for every 100 boys in primary school there are approximately 94 girls" (Adamu-Issah *et al*, 2007). Additionally, the government's school feeding programme that provides food to pupils on a pilot basis have all contributed to raising enrollment rate at the basic level of the country's educational structure.

High quality of education is a desirable goal for all nations. For any developing country aiming to have strong global economic, political and social competitiveness it has to maintain both horizontal (increased enrollment) and vertical (high quality) expansion in its educational system (El-Kogali & Suliman 2001).

Statement of the problem

The District, Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies, as part of their contribution to the promotion of quality education, also sponsor some teacher trainees who are bonded to come back to their respective districts to teach for a minimum of three years. Consequently, schools at the rural areas now have qualified teachers. There has also been a series of in-service training for teachers that are aimed at improving the supply of trained and qualified teacher at the basic level.

Parents have been sensitized about their responsibilities towards their children's education through the Quality Improvement in Primary School (QUIPS) and the Child School Community Progress in Education (child

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Scope) programmes. Through these interventions parents now have the interest in providing for the educational needs of their children in terms of uniform and stationery. Most of them also pay casual visits to the school and attend Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings on regular basis.

In spite of all these policies and interventions put in place to increase school enrolment and academic performance, and for that matter increase the number of children who complete at least the basic education, there is still a large number of children of school going age in the Techiman Municipality who are found roaming in the Techiman market during school hours. This seriously affects the academic performance of the children. Besides, Corville-Smith, DiIulio and Morison (1998) state that "despite the long history of concern over students' attendance, the issue has received relatively little attention from educational researchers". Instead of focusing on student attendance, researchers have mainly focused on students who drop out of school before receiving their Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). Observation made thus far raises a number of questions. Is it that the interventions are not enticing enough for children to stay in school? Or are there other factors that militate against students' attendance? This study seeks to evaluate the factors that affect the attendance of pupils in the Techiman Municipality.

Purpose of study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the various factors in the home and school environment that are likely to affect children's school attendance in the Techiman Municipality. In achieving this purpose, the specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Examine trends in basic education enrolment with specific focus on JHS Two students;

2. Identify the sex distribution of drop outs;

3. Identify the factors perceived as barriers to school attendance of children; and

4. Ascertain the reasons for dropping out of school.

Research questions

In order to achieve the above mentioned objectives, the following research questions have been put forward.

1. What has been the trend in school enrolment?

2. What are the background characteristics of school drop outs?

3. What are the reasons for irregular school attendance?

4. What are the reasons for students dropping out of school before completing the basic level?

Significance of the study

The study will unearth the basic factors leading to poor attendance and for that matter poor academic performance of students in the Techiman Municipality. The results of the study will be useful to all the stakeholders of education including teachers, parents, government and other recognized bodies like religious bodies and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in re-appraising educational facilities to improve standard of education.

To the teachers, it is anticipated that the results will be an indispensable guide to assist them to modify their teaching and administrative techniques in creating congenial teaching and learning atmosphere in schools

in order to reduce the incidence of truancy, which is a major determinant of poor academic performance in schools. This will be possible given that the findings of the study will be made known to the Techiman Education Directorate that will implement some of the recommendations.

It is anticipated that the results of the study will be of immense value to parents because strategies will be outlined on how to promote mutual cooperation and understanding between them and their adolescent youth in the area of discipline at home. Again, parents will be equipped with supervisory techniques over their children in an attempt to curb many of the factors affecting low performance. The findings will be made known to the parents through PTA meetings.

Finally, it is hoped that the outcome of the work will have educational implications especially for guidance and counselling services because when school related problems like absenteeism and truancy are identified in their formative periods, they can easily be handled by counsellors before such problems degenerate into complexities.

Delimitation of the study

A comprehensive research on factors affecting school attendance of JHS students can be quite involving and demanding. An objective investigation of the topic would demand that the researcher carry out the study in different geographical areas especially to cover the entire Techiman Municipality. Due to financial factors as well as time constraints, the study has been limited to the Techiman Township in order to capture how the Techiman market impacts on school attendance among JHS students.

Limitations of the study

It would have been better to contact the parents or guardians of the school drop outs in order to document their views on issues relating to drop out. However, this could not be done since most of the drop outs were not willing to lead the researcher to their parents or guardians. They indicated that it would amount to reporting their parents or guardians and could warrant severe punishment for them. This was even more difficult for those who were not staying with their biological parents. However, this limitation did not compromise the quality of the research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

      This chapter reviews relevant literature with regard to the factors that affect or have the potential to affect children's school attendance and for that matter their academic performance. The literature is divided into the following subtopics and their implication for child's school attendance.

1. Peer group influence and school attendance

2. Child labour and school attendance

3. Family background and school attendance

4. Parental attitude towards school attendance

5. Income level of parents and children's school attendance

6. Influence of parents' educational level and occupation on children's school attendance

7. School environment and children's school attendance

8. Impact of supervision and school attendance

9. Discipline and school attendance

10. Teacher's influence and children's school attendance

Peer group influence and school attendance

      A peer is a group of people within an identified age group that have similar characteristics such as interest and goal achievement. The peer serves as a major source of information to the children on issues that could have been

expertly handled by parents and teachers. According to Havighust and Newgarten (1966) the child grows up in two social worlds. One is the adult world thus his parents, teachers and other relatives. The second is the world of his peers or age-mates; thus his friends, play groups, clubs, gangs and school groups. Havinghust and Newgarten (1966) cited an example that there are groups in which it is mandatory that anybody who is on the 'in' must be scornful of the school and rebellious towards teachers.

Rice (1981) states that in the United States of America, peer group influence is a major factor that determines whether students will go to school or not. He said that most adolescents like to do what their friends have been doing. Thus, if friends have been dropping out of school to get work to do which earns them good income, they will be persuaded to do likewise. He continued that a strong peer group influence can affect students' school attendance, hence students who have become acculturated into a pattern of life that rejects education or have joined a delinquents group that rebels against the established system of education are strongly influenced by the peer group to be out of school.

Willis (1977) carried out an observation on twelve non-academic working class boys from a school in the centre of England. The study revealed that the boys absent themselves from class after registration and the boys are able to use signs, which they communicated to their friends in order to get out of class. This behaviour contributed to poor academic performance.

Jones (1974) also wrote to confirm the effects of peer group influence on other peers. He confirms that peer groups that are powerful influence a child's school life especially in England. He pointed out that peer group

influence can let one act against the school as an enemy. He cited a case of a young student who was able to commit suicide after a period of absence from school. The child had been affected by a complexity of influences and by bullying at school.

Wigg (1994) says children who have drop out of school in one way or the other try to entice some of their classmate into the street. This makes the unenticed children get divided attention and eventually drop out of school and indulge in all sort of social vices.

Child labour and school attendance

For economic reasons, some parents saddle their wards with heavy domestic duties, like selling goods, taking their wares to and from their selling places and even arranging and displaying them for sale each morning and evening. Similarly, first born children are also over strained or pushed too hard to accomplish or care for younger children even before they are ready for such responsibility. Their affiliative tendencies, anxiety withdrawal, and over sensitiveness make them become truant.

Cain (1977) observes that in a village in Bangladesh children who are aged around six work at tasks, which do not require physical maturity such as gathering fuel, fetching water and caring for the younger children. Boys aged eight or nine assume the responsibility for herding cattle and fishing; at the age of eleven, they begin agricultural work and by the age of fourteen they are capable of doing adult work. The parent does that to sustain economic life but it makes the children experience low school attendance.

Mendelievich (1979) reveals that about four percent of the world's population who are aged fifteen or less participate in the labour force. Most of

these working children live in the developing countries and normally work as unpaid family workers who help their families on the farms or in the small workshops and commercial establishments. Thus, children who work for third parties outside the family do not receive their wages but their parents get them.

The economic environment of a place makes the parents compel the children to work instead of attending school, which results in low school attendance. This makes attendance to be low. He further stresses that children can be found working in almost all sectors of the economy. Very often these children are found working in small informal and unregistered enterprises. Their activities include packing, labelling, cleaning shoes, guarding parked cars, loading and off-loading of goods, carrying messages and selling goods on either the street or road sides.

Agyemang (1988) states that most African parents of today and parents of pre-industrial societies such as the fisher folk, farmers and even the market women do not derive any pleasure in having their children in school. These parents think that it is an economic burden to send their children to school, feeling that if children stop attending school and rather help to perform some other job that could bring income to the home the better.

King (1981) states that in poor families, especially in the rural areas, child labour is very necessary to the survival of the families. Children who work have little or no time to attend school. She stresses further that in the Philippines fifteen percent of the boys and nine percent of the girls in the rural areas work in the paid labour force and therefore cannot attend school. Sixty-three percent also work in unpaid agricultural labour, which affects their school attendance.

Maclennan and Fitz (1985) observe that the problems which rural working children encounter are exacerbated in urban settings. Whereas rural child labour is traditionally carried out within the context of the household, urban child labour takes place within an employer-employee structure. When children are incorporated in this structure the parental protection that exists in domestic and aggression activities are generally absent. They stress further that the urban child labourers work long hours at strenuous and often dangerous tasks. Hence, the effect on their schooling is not considerable. Those who do manage to attend school are less industrious, less able and irregular in their attendance. This makes them to be at a disadvantage throughout their school years and beyond. They conclude that in both the rural and urban areas children do not attend school regularly because of child labour. The children also lose their income if they do attend school and their parents perceive that the cost of earning income far outweighs the benefit of education.

Twumasi and Assimeng (1987) reveal that child labour exists in both rural and urban areas in Ghana. Children who are between the ages of six and fourteen are engaged in fetching water and carrying farm produce for household use. The children normally assist their parents in domestic tasks such as farming and fishing instead of attending school. These activities are part of the processes, which prepare the children to occupy adult roles and responsibilities.

Quaigrain (1988) states that among the people of Otuom (in the Central Region of Ghana), children who go to school are less of an asset than those who go fishing. Most of the parents who are either fishermen or

fishmongers encourage their children to help them in their fishing activities instead of attending school. The boys join the fishing crew and the income that comes out of fishing is given to their parents. The young girls are also initiated into the fishing activities at a very early age. They help in the carrying, selling and the preservation of fish in order to supplement the family's income instead of attending school. He concludes that most parents who have their children at school regard them as "family parasites" since their feeding, clothing and total school expenditure become a drain on the financial resources of the family.

Owusu (1987) reveals that in Techiman (Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana), forty-four percent of the juveniles who go into early employment need money to buy textbooks, school uniforms or to pay for their school fees (though now children at that level do not pay any fees), while thirty-seven percent are engages in trading activities in order to supplement the household budget. The early employment of the young children is due to poverty that their parents face.

Family background and school attendance

The home and for that matter the family plays a very important role in truancy. The home is the source of love and security for its members especially the young ones. As new entrants to this life, children need security, self-confidence and love from their parents. Hurlock (1964) states the following:

> *The influence of parents is unquestionably one of the strongest and most persistent factor determining what the child's interest in school will be. Not only do parents influence his attitude towards school in general but they have a profound influence*

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on his attitude towards the importance of education, towards studying, toward different school subjects and towards his teachers. When parents show interest in the child's schooling and the pride in his achievements, he usually lives up to his capabilities; when they are indifferent, he is likely to be indifferent also.

According to Harvisghust and Newgarten (1966), the family relationships are of primary factor in the live of individuals. Often than not a child's behaviour can be traced to how he was brought up in the home.

The child very often reflects the values his parents hold, their economic status, size of the family and the general atmosphere which prevails at home. Harvisghust and Newgarten (1966) stated the following: "The limited size of the family affords parents a relatively greater opportunity to devote to each child than would be possible in a large family. In a situation, the frequency and emotional intensity of the interaction between parents and child is likely to be great". They further state that: "mothers of small families are inclined to become intensively involved with children focusing upon them the care, affection and expectations than in a large might become dispersed''.

From the above we can realize why in our society where polygamy is allowed by custom and men marry many wives lead to large families. It is also discovered that children from low socio-economic homes experience difficulty in learning because they lack the fundamental resources needed for efficient work and as a result play truant. Parents of low socio-economic status have a low view of education and so fail very often to urge their truant children to go to school regularly.

In some homes, parents do not care about their children with regards to basic needs like good food, proper clothing and other minor personal needs.

Emotionally, these children harbour a feeling of unhappiness within them and school going apparently becomes of little interest to them. Unfortunately parents with neglect attitude towards their children nurse them into hardened truants and drop outs. Some parents do not take interest in their children's attendance and progress at school. They neither call for their wards report cards nor pay visits to the school to find out from their teachers how the children are faring in their learning. Some are only willing to visit the school when their children are involved in cases that are in their favour. Children therefore take advantage of their parents' lack of interest in their school to indulge in playing truancy.

Parental attitude towards students attendance

It is generally accepted in most societies that students should receive good education so as to help build the nation. Parents have the duty to allow their children go to school regularly. In most homes parents care less about their children's attendance to school and for that matter fail to provide their needs (such as payment of school fees, school materials and other expenses) at school. When these important needs are not provided, students are emotionally and psychologically affected at school. They feel unhappy within themselves. Here, school going becomes of a little interest to them and they do not care much what their parents tell them about education.

Some parents have unfavourable attitudes toward education of their children. Such parents do not co-operate with the teachers to train their wards properly. They do not care about their performance at school and they often refuse to attend school activities like Parent Teachers Association Meetings, Speech and Prize Giving Days and school exhibitions. When parents fail to honour such invitations, their wards get to know of their lack of interest in

their school affairs and then the students feel reluctant to attend school regularly.

The type of occupation of parents also contributes to the causes of students' irregularity in school. Most parents in Techiman are businessmen and women and most of the time they need help from their wards to go to bank, open their shops or take care of the younger siblings when they are away on business trips. Students in these situations often find themselves late for school, so for fear of punishment for lateness they often decide to stay somewhere and hide from school.

Hurlock (1964) writes that "children who are truant with their parents' knowledge and consent have adopted their parents' attitude towards school and learned to place a low value on education. This is especially true of children whose parents often want them to help at home or get jobs as soon as they look old enough to obtain working papers''

Some truants are encouraged to be interested in the kind of work their mothers do, like trading, selling at the market or hawking. They choose to engage in that instead of going to school because their mothers will be happy with them and also they could lay hands on a few cedis for their needs.

Robinson (1978) argues that in England many parents have serious doubts about the relevance and usefulness of today's schools in preparing children for adult life. Furthermore, she says that some parents are also not interested in school for various reasons and have not lost any opportunity for not being at school. Some parents keep their children at home to help them with household activities while others collude with anxious children who are afraid to leave home and go to school. This encourages children to have low

school performance. She concludes that most parents are uncertain at times whether to excuse their children from school because they complain of being ill and some parents also write letters on certain occasions which are patently untrue.

Galloway (1982) reveals in studies in Sheffield, England, that some students and some parents regard school as not very important. He went further to say that some parents make it clear that they regard education at least, with a considerable scepticism. Consequently, some parents do not regard their children's absence from school as any sort of problem. This makes the children have low academic performance.

Reid (1985) quoted from several authors on how families or parents contribute to irregular school attendance of their wards. Family situations which contribute to poor school attendance include:

1. families where unemployment or irregular employment is the norm;

2. families where the father and the mother are away from home for long periods either for reasons of work or other reasons;

3. families on low incomes;

4. families with an above average number of children;

5. families overcoming or experiencing marital disharmony such as parental divorce or separation;

6. one parent families;

7. families in which the parents are uncooperative and/or hostile to authority in general, especially to school authorities;

8. families where the parents are not interested n their children's progress at school; and

9. families where the parents do not insist that their children attend school, or take no notice of their absence or do not insist on prompt at school as manifested by their children oversleeping, being late and disliking school journeys.

Generally, it is the immediate responsibility of parents to send their children to school and make sure that the children are retained in school. However, due to a combination of the above mentioned factors parents are not able to assume such responsibility to the fullest, leading to low attendance and eventually drop out.

Income level of parents and children's school attendance

JHS students (who are mostly adolescents) are mostly dependent on parents or other significant adults. In Ghana there are various living arrangements for young people. These range from living with biological parents, grandparents and other relations such as uncles, aunts or older siblings, to living with unrelated members of the household as house help or apprentices, to residing in their own households in a marital union. The relationship of the adolescent to the head of the household is one measure of living arrangements. All things being equal, adolescents living with both parents will have access to more resources than those living with nonrelatives as house help or apprentices, or those who reside as household heads themselves (Awusabo-Asare, Biddlecom, Kumi-Kyereme, & Patterson, 2006).

Education of children and the level of income of households have been linked to have a strong positive relationship. Studies that link education to per capita or household income in Egypt reveal that school enrollment significantly decreases as per capita or household income decreases, with

girls' enrolment rates decreases profoundly as compared to boys (Fergany, 2000). Similarly, using a proxy for households' level of wealth constructed from household possessions of consumer durable, Assad, Deborah, & Zibani, (2001) find that the household wealth index has a significant positive impact on children's schooling.

Filmer (1999) documented a similar finding on the significant positive relationship between school attendance and household level of wealth for 41 developing countries using Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data. Elkogali and Suliman (2001), using data for Egypt (1995) and Yemen (1997) find significantly positive association between household level of wealth and child's schooling.

It is true that irregular attendees to school belong to parents of lower income group. This is because they are financially handicapped and are not able to pay their ward's school fees and other related fees regularly and their wards sometimes go to school in tattered clothes. Parents in this group cannot afford the provision of educational materials. In fact their homes are devoid of learning facilities. In the Upper class homes which are characterised by small families, students get all the basic needs in life and they are encouraged to learn by their parents' favourable attitudes towards education. Such parents supply their wards with materials, and they also serve as good role models.

Rice (1981) states that in United States of America, many parents of low socio-economic class produce drop out children. If parents complete only fifth grade, they consider their children graduating from junior high school to be sufficient. Parents sometimes discourage their children from attending school. The older daughters are urged to stay at home to look after the

younger siblings or to do house duties. The sons are also expected to go out and look for work to do in order to earn income to help the family.

Webster (1987) argues that in the third world countries, children's educational performance is unlikely to be dramatically improved since they are subjected to a number of factors which are beyond their control. He enumerates three major factors that children encounter as follows: In the first place, poor children who experience chronic malnutrition from birth are educationally disadvantaged because malnutrition affects the development of their brain tissues. Secondly, the children are very important sources of labour for the rural families. The daughters are also expected to leave school early at not more than nine years of age. Finally, although junior secondary schooling has been state funded, where the school fees per term may be up to four times the average monthly wage of male manual workers, the parents find it difficult to keep just a child in school. He concludes that poor health, child labour and poverty work against the ambitions of many third world children and their parents. This can lead to either low academic performance or early dropping out of school.

Anderson (1988) states that in both the developed and developing countries, children who come from poor families do not enrol in school. Those who attend school normally drop out as compared to children who came from better-off families. Her main reason is that the families pay for their children's education both directly and indirectly. Direct outlays include school fees, activity fees, supplies, uniforms, transportation and lunches. The indirect or opportunity cost includes the household labour which is not done or the income that children do not earn for being at school. Moreover, parents

will decide to bear the cost of educating their children if they perceive that the returns from education (such as a high income in the future, a more productive household over all or greater prestige) justify the expense.

The influence of parents' education and occupation on children's school attendance

In a study conducted by Boateng (2003), children whose parents are highly educated were found to be more truant followed by those whose parents have lower level of education, then the children of lower educated parents. Consequently, children of parents in the higher professional occupations according to her are more truant followed by children of parents in lower professional occupation. Since highly educated parents are in high professional jobs they have more money for their children to use and this motivates the children to stay out of school buying all that they need to keep them happy.

According to Boateng (2003), the high professionals get into jobs that are demanding of their time and energy. For example, doctors lawyers engineers, principals of schools and confidential secretaries "go to work early, get involve in the job and come back from work late" and their absence makes it possible for their children to play truant. According to the study, children of parents who do not have any form of education and profession mostly play with those of low level of educational backgrounds.

Parents do not have much money to give children for spending and so they may not find it easy to stay away from school since they will not have money to spend during this period. Such children help their parents hawking to bring in money to help the family; their parents who are mostly self-employed also have time to watch what goes on during the day.

According to the finding the middle–class parents have time to look at their children's work books and when they find out that their ward's level in class participation is poor, they try to do something to remedy the situation. With all these, the child cannot afford to be truant.

Boateng (2003) further states that the family size is another influencing factor on truancy. According to findings from a research, students from medium size families get more involved in truancy: followed by those from large families while those in small families come last. This may be because they are so many that whoever wants to play truant may be reported back at home by other siblings.

Those from small families of two or three cannot also successfully play truancy since they are few enough to check themselves. Middle-born children were found to be more truant than the early born children and the later- born came last. The explanation to this is that at home early-born children are more used by parents and they hardly have time to loiter about and do what they like. Also the later born children are closer to parents and most of them are pets to parents. Consequently, middle born children are most of the time left on their own to play about. This freedom to play about is carried down to school, the urge to keep playing will force the middle- born children to stay on the way and play without realizing the school.

Early born children come next in the behaviour but later-born children hardly play truant because they have elders who will check on them and may report them back at home. In his lecture notes in Psychology of Adolescence, Allhassan states that "insufficient interest by parents in their children's education generates the problem of truancy. A parent that shows interest in the

child's education is likely to monitor the child's attendance in school either directly or indirectly"

From the above discussions, it can be clearly seen that the formation of any undesirable behaviours manifested by children in most cases have their causal factors from the home.

School environment and children's school attendance

Children naturally enjoy living in a warm and secure environment and so long as the school environment remains conducive to the children, they will be motivated to remain in school. To cite a few examples of studies that link school quality to child's schooling, Lloyd and Cynthia (2001) using data from Egypt, find that school quality (such as time available for learning, teacher's quality, treatment by teachers and teacher attitudes) is associated with grade level attainment. Dre`ze and Kingdon (2001) using data from rural India find that school participation and/or grade attainment are positively influenced by several school quality variables, including infrastructure quality, teacher regularity, parent-teacher cooperation, and number of teachers per child.

Earthman, Cash and van Berkun (1995) report similar links between building quality and higher test scores. For example, researchers studying Georgia's primary schools found that fourth-grade students in non-modernized buildings scored lower in basic skills assessments than students in modernized or new buildings (Plumley 1978). Similarly, Chan (1979) found that eighth-grade students scored consistently higher across a range of standardized tests if housed in new or modernized buildings. Bowers and Burkett (1987) found that students in newer buildings outperformed students in older ones and posted better records for health, attendance, and discipline.

Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) report that in the developing countries, the basic elements of an orderly school environment are missing. Hence, students and teachers are regularly absent. The stocks of teaching materials are limited and the physical surroundings are so chaotic that it seems miraculous that learning occurs in the schools. They further state that a student's ability to learn is heavily influenced by the school's environment. Learning can occur more easily if students and teachers attend classes regularly and according to an established time-table. Hence, if school facilities are clean and in good repair with teaching materials available teachers can be encouraged to work very hard to achieve the academic performance.

Molnar, Smith, Zahorik, Palmer, Halback, and Ehrle (1999) state that homeless children may suffer difficulties in school because they face an array of problems that interfere with learning and attendance, lack of quiet place to study and inadequate supplies of school materials as well as stress of constant moves from one school to the other, or one town to the other affect their academic performance.

Bronfenbrenner (1989) states that young people need to have adults who are 'crazy' about them. However, in our schools teachers aren't crazy about students and students are not crazy about teachers. Instead, they are driving each other crazy. He continues to say that school support networks are weak for both students and teachers. Teachers may resent what they perceive as inadequate encouragement, assistance and resources to do their job while students also feel that nobody at school cares about them.

Impact of supervision on school attendance

Supervision has much to do with educational leadership. Taylor (as cited in Atta, Agyenim-Boateng, & Baafi-Frimpong, 2000) stated that man by nature is lazy and, therefore needed strict supervision by the manager in order to get him do the work he has been assigned to. Okumbe (1998) considered supervision of today as that dimension of educational administration, which is concerned with improving institutional effectiveness. According to Okumbe, supervision evolved from the realization that we accomplish very little alone and that we cannot accomplish much by grouping people together without a leader. The diverse, often disorganized, efforts of individuals need to be directed and channelled into purposeful stream of productivity to achieve the common objective. In this regard, the objective of supervision in schools is the channelling of teachers work towards better academic attainments of students. Tanner and Tanner (1980) also stated that the aim of supervision is to help teachers to function at the top of professional vision and that whatever the type of supervision done in schools, the objective is directing teachers toward improved performance.

Atta *et al*. (2000) observed that supervision is of particular importance in educational administration. This is because of its far-reaching effects on the achievement of school programmes, objectives and the attainment of educational goals. In both observations by Okumbe (1998) and Atta *et al*. (2000), the main objective of schools is to prepare students to achieve better academic results. In the course of the students academic preparation by the teachers, the head of the school, the circuit supervisor and school inspectors

become involved in supervision. Each of these supervisors' position and role help to improve academic performance.

In addressing the issues of contemporary complexities in the school organization not only does supervision point to developing and updating the teachers knowledge and competence and improving attitudes of teachers towards work but it also reduces the rate of irregular attendance, absenteeism, truancy and lateness of students which otherwise waste students previous hours and years. Supervision also helps the head of an institution to give an instant summative evaluation of both teachers and students under him. Effective supervision sets a right tone of the school and the headmaster can decide to eschew coercive leadership style and adopt the laissez faire attitude of supervision so that he can have time to do other administrative assignments.

Supervision is a great task that must be effectively executed in the administration of every organization if set goals are to be achieved. The Cambridge International English Dictionary (1995) defines 'to supervise' as watching over an activity or job to make certain that it is done correctly. Clickman and Stephen (1995) express that supervision is the function in schools that draws together the discrete elements of instructional effectiveness into whole school action.

Swanstrom (1967) quotes Mortimore who describes effective school as one in which students' progress is higher than might be expected from consideration of its intake. In other words, an effective school thus adds extra value to its students' outcomes in comparison with other schools serving similar intakes. This means that supervision takes care of scrutinizing the curriculum, syllabuses and contents of subject areas, teaching and learning

materials in terms of appropriateness, quantity and quality and time the materials are available, time-table, student school attendance and suitability of learning environment and above all the teachers knowledge, technical and social skills and methods of instruction. If students are not properly supervised, most of them especially the academically weak ones will resort to truancy since they may feel neglected.

Discipline and school attendance

Quite likely no topic holds more interest and concern for school authorities and parents than discipline. Discipline has a great influence on child's school attendance, especially when it is exercised in a wrong way and context. Crowther (1995) defines discipline as 'training' especially of the kind that produces self-control, orderliness and capacity for cooperation.

Medinnus and Johnson (1976) stated that in current thinking, discipline is often quite equated with guidance. However, discipline might be more appropriately described as the methods used by heads to ensure their pupils compliance with that guidance. Okumbe (1998) also saw discipline as the action taken by management to enforce organizational standards. In any organization where the objectives are to be optimally achieved, all the members are required to adhere strictly to the various behaviour patterns. Equally, in the schools, there are standards, rules and regulations, which control the conduct of the teachers, non-teaching staff and students.

Clifford (1959) conducted a research that was based on records of disciplinary techniques used by parents. The study differed with the age of the pupils. The study divided the training techniques into positive sanctions-praise and tangible rewards and negative sanctions-physical punishment and

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deprivation of privileges. From the study, Clifford identified eleven areas that require discipline. Some of these are pupil relationship-quarrelling, aggression, eating-refusal to eat, leaving the table during meals; sleep-refusal to go to bed, noise in bed; dressing-refusal to dress properly; activities-not attending classes and preps; inappropriate behaviour-irritability, destructiveness, forbidden behaviour; social-inappropriate behaviour and insistence of own rights

Clifford's study that has been endorsed by Andrew (1994) could be likened to the various acts of indiscipline in the Junior and Senior Secondary Schools in Ghana today. Some of these acts are indecent dressing, aggressiveness and "wee" smoking. Others are disrespect for school authority, robbing of forex bureaux and even shooting of fellow students.

Aduonum (2003) observed that in the USA, a large percentage of teaching force retire voluntarily each year partly because of the unbearable challenging force of the students' attitude and behaviour. Some final year students in the SSS refuse to attend classes after their registration. The Director-General of the GES (2000) circular letter stated that school heads should take appropriate sanctions against students who misbehave after registering for the SSSCE. Again, Daily Graphic (2001) stated that there is the need for parents to advise their wards appropriately on practices and behaviour bordering on alcoholism, occultism and truancy. It is a known fact that students from schools within the same town sometimes engaged themselves in brutal fights. Others also destroy their own school properties during demonstrations. All these activities do not help students to concentrate well on their academic work resulting in poor performance in their examinations

In response to acts of discipline heads of schools are compelled to use the appropriate disciplinary action to maintain the schools' standards. Okumbe (1998) recommended two types of discipline to be used in schools. These are preventive and corrective. Preventive discipline, which is more recommended, is the type that seeks to instil self-discipline. It has the advantage of building morale and long-range goals.

With regard to corrective discipline, the administrative action follows on infraction. Davis and Newstrom (1985) stated that corrective is to reform the offender, to deter others from similar actions and to maintain consistent effective group standards. Medinnus and Johnson (1976) noted that when discipline takes the form of punishment, it supplies only the cues to acceptable behaviour, which is a short-term measure. In the school, corporal punishment is least recommended. Where it is administrated, the head or his/her delegate does it. Counselling follows this, which is usually aimed at reforming the offender to concentrate on his/her academic work for example.

In a situation where corrective discipline has to be taken, Cascio (1992) suggested that it has to proceed from an oral warning to a written warning, to a suspension, and finally to a dismissal. The GES rules on the administration of disciplinary measures in the pre-tertiary institutions follow the same procedure.

The importance of discipline to schools, and for that matter, successful academic work cannot be underestimated. Medinnus and Johnson (1976) noted that the most important single reason for the discipline is the students' non-compliance with institutional demands. Andrew (1994) observed that discipline helps to train students to be useful citizens of the society. Again,

Andrew observed that a college or school with well-ordered routines and a quiet atmosphere enables its products to apply them diligently to the work they are doing. These observations could be true in the sense that students gain high concentration on their studies instead of wasting their time on activities that counter academic work.

Davis and Newstrom (1985) observed that the progressive discipline has the advantage of enabling the head and the study enough time for remedial actions. Students in the long run benefit by settling down to do the right things, which could be higher concentration on their academic work.

Although discipline may achieve a behavioural goal, its accomplishment may be nullified by the emotional and attitudinal side effects it produces in the student. Several researchers (Bandura & Walters, 1959; Hollenberg & Sperry, 1951; Sears, 1950) have observed that harsh, arbitrary and inconsistent discipline arouses resentment, hostility and anxiety in students. The hostility may be directed toward others (Hoffman, 1960).

In the institution, students who usually undergo harsh treatment often become bullies. Sometimes after receiving their punishment, such students go back to the dormitories to subject their victims to severe beatings, destroy their properties and run away from the school. This behaviour does not help such students to gain much from their academic work and may even lead to drop out.

In summary, heads of schools need to manage their students' discipline. In the school, physical punishment could be sparingly used because it is violent on the offender. It breeds a response detrimental to the individual and the society of which he is a part. Kindness, respect and sensitivity on the

other hand, are qualities worth cultivating in the growing human being, and these may well develop out of the intimate relationship between the teacher and student.

Teachers' influence on children's school attendance

Many and varied factors determine conducive climate to the child. One of the most influential factors is the relationships that exist between the teacher and the children. The teacher's teaching method is also a factor.

Education is a public service and teachers are servants of the public who are paid to teach successfully and not just the brightest or motivated children. The relationship between the teacher and the student is very important in schoolwork. No student will like to stay in a school where the teachers are unfair and hostile.

When a student feels there is no good relationship between him and his teacher, the student begins to absent himself from school. Burt (1969) asserts that at school, a dull student feels a hopeless failure, his life may be one humiliating round of rebuke, disagree and punishment. He soon comes to dread the daily journey. He is tempted to play truant that brings freedom and opportunities for enjoying mischief.

It is important for teachers to have understanding, affection and consideration for the weak student irrespective of his ability, social class and sex. By adopting fairness in his approach to students the teacher will create incentives for students to attend school regularly.

Some teachers are in the habit of making use of students during class hours. For instance, sending them to banks to cash or deposit money for them, some of them to do shopping and also work in their farm or fetch water for

them. When students are treated in this way, they detest coming to school and therefore, stay away from school.

Hurlock (1964) states that because boys are sensitive to fairness and because they are aware of disapproval of their teachers and because they are punished more than girls in school, they build up a dislike for teachers, work below their capacities and cause disturbances in the classroom. In general, attitudes of boys toward school grow less favourable and these affect their academic performance as well as future lives. Most teachers make their teaching uninteresting due to inadequate preparation. As a result, ineffective exercises are given to students to work. Surprisingly other teachers occupy students with writing of notes whilst they sit back working lotto or go outside to do their private businesses. Students are generally influenced by their teachers' behaviour. When students see their teachers behaving in this way, they resort to absenteeism which seriously affects their academic performance (Hurlock, 1964).

Farnel and Finlayson (1988) report that 'pressure and boredom' are most often mentioned by students as negative aspects of school academic work. They explained that the pressure to meet academic standard that seem unattainable may lead to disengagement and dropout of school. Miller & Leinhardt (1987) find that the school's warm accommodation environment enhances engagement and thus increases the school's holding power of academic excellence.

Boateng (2003) sums up common factors that cause truancy as follows: (1) distance between home and school: (2) low academic performance (3) excessive school work which the child finds difficult to cope with (4) fear of

punishment (5) laziness/self indulgence, (6) excessive home cares (7) poor study habit (8) poor perception of education in relation to life (9) lack of interest of school and or teacher, (10) poor teaching methods and inadequate teaching facilities.

Summary

The literature has indicated that various factors are responsible for poor school attendance of basic school pupils. Notable among them are peer influence, child labour, poor family background, poor parental attitude to education, school environment and poor academic performance. Most of the studies were however conducted in other countries and some parts of Ghana. There is no such studies in the Techiman Municipality making it difficult to conclude if these factors apply everywhere in the country. This is the gap the current study seeks to close.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the procedure for conducting the study. The chapter involves research design, the population, the choice of sample and instrument for the study that was used in the data collection. It looks at the procedure that was used in collecting data and finally how those data were analysed.

Research design

The research approach adopted for this research was descriptive survey design. It involves the collecting of data to test the proposal and assumptions concerning the current status of this research's subjects. In this research the descriptive survey method dealt with the analysis and interpretation of data that have been gathered for a specific purpose, the understanding and solution of a significant problem. According to Best (1970:137) knowledge of present status is a first step in problem solving. In the light of Best's statement this research attempted to gain knowledge of the research subjects to solve their problems regarding their school attendance as well as academic performance. Gay (1992:217-218) stated that a high percentage of reported research studies are descriptive in nature and it is useful for investigating a variety of educational problems.

The descriptive research methodology was chosen because the study sought to investigate the circumstances leading to drop out and this helped to understand their experiences. This is because the way people tell their stories and why they behave the way they do, give an accurate picture of the sequences of events in their lives (Polkinghorne, 1988). Additionally, descriptive survey design has the potential to provide us with a lot of information obtained from quite a large sample of individuals. At the same time, it provides a more accurate picture of events at a point in time.

Profile of the study area

The economic environment of human settlement has a great influence on school attendance. In most parts of the country, school attendance has not been encouraging; the youth are made to assume responsibility of herding cattle and of fishing, and others are made to farm while others are made to trade instead of attending school.

In many commercial towns and cities in Ghana, school children especially the youth in their adolescent stage involve themselves in trading, loading and off-loading goods at lorry stations which earn them a lot of money. Others join their peers to watch films and do all sorts of bad things instead of going to school. It is in the wake of this that this section of the study looks at the profile of the Techiman township to examine how conducive or otherwise it is for the education.

Techiman occupies a strategic geographical position so far as the map of Ghana is concerned; it is nearer to Kintampo, the central point of Ghana. Techiman is a hub around which other districts radiate. It links towns like Sunyani, Wenchi, Ejura, Nkoranza, Tamale, and Kumasi. Techiman possesses

certain unique features over the other districts of the Brong-Ahafo Region. Sunyani is no doubt the capital of Brong-Ahafo Region. However, Techiman is the hub of economic activities in the region. Techiman has one of the most vibrant markets in our sub-region. That means a lot of economic activities go on in the municipality.

The major occupation of the indigenous people is farming. They enjoy two major vegetational zones. The yearly crops include plantain, yam and cassava while the mid or short period cultivated crops are tomatoes, maize, garden eggs, and beans. Other groups of workers in the area include traders, artisans, and government employees.

The social life style of the town cannot be overemphasised; there is regular supply of electricity and there are many social amenities and a variety of entertainment activities like musical concerts, video shows, discos, street jams and many others. The patronage for these centres is very high and is mostly patronised by the youth and most adolescents of school going age.

People from all walks of life can be found in the municipality. This has given rise to all sorts of criminal activities and social vices like arm robbery and prostitution. Due to this, teenage pregnancy, the use of drugs, and dropout from school are very predominant in the municipality.

The Techiman Municipality has a number of public and private educational institutions. This includes 103 Kindergartens, 85 Primary Schools, 73 Junior Secondary School, and 8 Senior Secondary Schools. The rapid growth in population, the shift system, and the large size of the market pose problems to teachers, educational authorities and parents with regard to effective control of students both in school and at home.

Target population

The target population of a survey is defined by Jaeger (1988) as "the group of persons, objects or institutions that defines the objects of the investigation". In this study, the target population comprises the Junior High School (JHS) Two students in all the public schools in the Techiman Municipality. The public schools were selected instead of the private schools in view of the fact that most of the government interventions to increase enrolment are geared towards the public schools. The JHS 2 class of students were chosen because at that level (contrary to JHS 1 students) they were considered to be exposed enough to be able to respond to the questionnaires. The JHS 3 students were not chosen because they may complete school before the research ends and tracing them will be very difficult.

In addition to the students, all the teachers and the parents of the JHS 2 students were targeted for this study. This is because teachers and parents have a greater influence in the school attendance and academic performance of students. It is therefore imperative that they will be helpful in explaining children's school attendance.

Sample size and sampling procedure

The need for selecting some respondents as sample cannot be over emphasised. Sampling is necessary because in dealing with large number of respondents (especially the students, parents and teachers in this particular research), there is the need to get a fair representation of the people since everybody in the population cannot be studied. However, the question about the right sample size in quantitative research is one that concerns not only the beginner but also any social investigator. In simple terms it refers to basic

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questions such as; how large or small must the sample be for it to be representative (Sarantakos, 1997).

There are eighteen (18) public Junior Secondary Schools in Techiman township with a total JHS student population of 1166 students. For the purpose of representativeness, 10 schools (representing 55.6%) were randomly selected for the study. In each of the schools, 15% of the total JHS Two students were selected using a simple random method of sampling. This gave a total sample of 130 JHS Two students for the study. This method gives every student an equal chance of being selected for the study. The parents of all the selected students were also selected automatically for the study. Table 1 presents the distribution of the sample population of students.

For the purpose of comparison, children who are out of school were also interviewed to find out factors that have contributed to their being at home when they are supposed to be in school. Since the exact number of these children is not known, convenience method of sampling was used to select them. Through this method the researcher selected one hundred (100) of these children for the study.

In addition to the students, the head teacher and the class teacher were purposively selected for the study. A total of 10 teachers and 10 head teachers were selected for the study. This was to help document their informed opinion on school attendance of their students, and also to examine their views on the school enrolment and dropout rate in their respective schools. In all, 380 people were selected for the study; 130 JHS Two students, 130 parents, 100 dropouts, 10 teachers and 10 head teachers.

Table 1:

Distribution of the sample of students

Serial No	Name of School	Number of JHS 2 students	Sample (15% of JHS 2 students)	Number of parents
1	Adventist Preparatory JHS	96	14	14
2	St. Paul JHS	85	13	13
3	St. Francis JHS	83	13	13
4	Ahmadiyya JHS	79	12	12
5	Zongo JHS	73	11	11
6	Techiman Ameyaw JHS	106	16	16
7	Techiman Islamic JHS	62	9	9
8	Kromo Presby JHS	88	13	13
9	Al-Khariya Islamic JHS	81	12	81
10	Techiman SDA JHS	115	17	17
	Total	868	130	130

Source: Ghana Education Service Directorate, Techiman Municipality (2007)

Research instruments

The main instrument used for the collection of data for the study was questionnaire. Questionnaire was chosen because they are very effective for securing factual information about practices and conditions of which the respondents are presumed to have knowledge and for enquiring into opinions and attitudes of the subjects. Another reason for choosing questionnaire is that it is easy to fill and takes little time as compared to other instruments like the interview. Self-administered questionnaires were given to head teachers, teachers and pupils while for drop outs and parents who could not read and write, the researcher administered the questionnaire to them.

The questionnaire comprised both closed and open-ended questions. In the case of open-ended questions the respondents are free to formulate their own answers the way they consider to be the most appropriate, in their own way and in their own words.

In a sample survey it is difficult for the researcher to ensure that the questions, categories, and language used in the questionnaire are shared uniformly by respondents and that the replies returned have the same meanings for all respondents (Mays & Pope, 1995). It may also produce untrustworthy results because they delve into private matters that people may not be completely truthful about. Questionnaires require subjects who can articulate their thoughts well and sometimes even put such thoughts in writing.

Pre-testing the instruments

Pre-testing the instrument helps ensure the reliability and the degree of consistency of its items. The pre-testing of the instruments was done in the Sunyani Municipality. Four (4) Junior High Schools were selected randomly. These are Ridge Experimental JHS, Seventh Day Adventists JHS, Methodist 'A' JHS and Roman Catholic JHS. Five (5) pupils and two (2) teachers were selected from each school for the pre-testing.

To help determine whether the researcher succeeded in measuring the constructs she sought to measure, the individual items and the composites were tested for reliability. This was accomplished by computing the Cronbach's alpha coefficient which indicated the degree of item-total correlation. The coefficient alpha is a measure of internal consistency and reliability that involves computing of average of all possible split-half coefficients resulting from splitting of the scale items. It varies from 0 to 1 and

a value of 0.6 or less generally indicates unsatisfactory internal consistency reliability.

Most of the composite reliabilities were above 0.70. For example, the reliability for the items in the questionnaires for head teachers was 0.76, teachers (0.69), students (0.78), drop outs (0.73) and parents/guardians (0.74). Thus, the data confirmed that the items helped to measure the construct assigned and the scales were internally consistent.

Data collection procedure

Before data were collected from the schools, an introductory letter (explaining the purpose of the study) was sent to those schools concerned. This was done so that the researcher could get access to the schools. Subsequently, appointments were booked with teachers and students for the questionnaire administration. The data collection from the selected students and teachers was done in a period of two weeks. That is, the questionnaires were administered to them in their schools. Data collection from the parents was done at their residence after their wards had been interviewed. The questionnaire for the dropouts was administered at the market places where they were met doing their activities. This was done because it was very difficult identifying the dropouts. Time was taken to explain what the research was about.

Ethical consideration

Before data was collected from the students, consent was sought from their teachers since most of them were below the age of eighteen (18) and because the data was collected in school. After that the consent of the children

were also sought. For the dropouts, the purpose of the study was thoroughly explained to them after which their consent was sought. Again, no matter how sensitive the information, ethical investigators protect the right to privacy by guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality. Obviously, information given anonymously secures the privacy of individuals (Singleton, Straits, & Straits 1993). Subsequently, to protect the identity of the research participants, pseudonyms were used to represent them. Thus, the report of the findings did not include the real names of respondents or anything that could lead to their identification.

Analysis of data

Once the information was collected it was statistically analysed in order to draw conclusions from it. The data was analysed according to the research questions of the study. The responses of the respondents were categorised and presented in tabular and graphical form using the Scientific Package for Service Solution (SPSS) computer software (version 12). The frequencies and percentages were used to determine each response category. These aided the discussion and interpretation of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter analyses the factors that affect children's school attendance and consequently school dropout. The first section deals with school enrolment and attendance in the selected schools as described by teachers, head teachers and students in JHS 2. The second section focuses on the background characteristics of the drop outs while section three looks at reasons for irregular school attendance. The last section deals with causes of drop out in the Municipality. The chapter is organised according to the research questions of the study.

Researcher Question 1:

What has been the trend in school enrolment?

Analysis of the current trend of enrolment growth rate at the national level in primary schools points to difficulties ahead in the attainment of Universal Primary Completion (UPC) by 2015, unless a special approach is adopted to reach the unreached. There is, therefore, the need to adopt a programme that is flexible and adaptive and can reach large numbers of children in ' hard to reach areas' including urban slum areas or children who have to perform other duties besides schooling as well as children living in under-served areas (Adamu-Issah, Elden, Forson & Schrofer, 2007).

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the school enrolment in the ten (10) selected schools in the Techiman Municipality. The mean enrolment was 259 students with a minimum of 94 students and a maximum of 475 students. Similarly, the mean number of students in the JHS 2 class was 97 students with a minimum of 36 students per class and a maximum of 172 students per class. The standard deviation of about 116 for school enrolment and 42 for JHS enrolment shows the average deviation of the individual responses from the mean.

Table 2:

Average school enrolments and class size as at July, 2008

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total enrolment of the school	10	94.00	475.00	258.80	115.98
Number of students in JHS 2	10	36.00	172.00	96.80	41.57

Source: Fieldwork, 2008
N=Total Number of Schools

The mean class size (97) was very large considering the normal class size of between 35 and 45 students required for effective teaching and learning. Consequently, as indicated in Table 3, 90% of the JHS 2 class teachers considered their class to be too large for them to handle. Out of this proportion, 60% were of the view that the large size of their class affects children's attendance since large class size does not allow for individual

attention. Interestingly, 40% said that even though the classes were large, this did not affect school attendance.

Table 3:

Teachers' perception on large class and its effect on attendance

Teachers' Perception	Agree	Disagree	Total
Large	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	10 (100%)
Effect of attendance	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	10 (100%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2008

Research Question 2:

What are the background characteristics of school drop outs?

One of the objectives of the study was to find out the background characteristics of drop outs in the Techiman Township. The following background characteristics were observed

Sex distribution of drop outs

The sex distribution includes the numbers of male to female ratio used in the research. Out of the 100 dropouts selected for the study, 71.0% of them were females while 29.0% were males. The basis for the inclusion of the sex as a variable was to identify the sex distribution of drop outs. It was realised that most of the dropouts were females. This confirms the literature that most of the people who drop out of school in Africa are mostly females (Obeng, 2002; Akuffo 1987; Yeboah 1993a, 1993b). In addition, the teachers and head teachers selected for the study corroborated this phenomenon as about 80% of them indicated that more girls drop out of their schools than boys.

Age distribution of dropouts

The ages of the dropouts were categorised into groups ranging from "below 13" years to "above 16 years". The classification was based on the assumption that at age 12, a child should be in primary six and by at most 16 years he/she might have completed Junior High School. Therefore, since the study focused on dropouts at the basic education level, it was considered more appropriate to classify the ages accordingly. More than half of the dropouts (59.0%) were above 16 years. This was followed by those between 13 years and 16 years (31.0%) and then below 13 years (10.0%). The implication here is that the dropouts are still young children who could be sent back to school. This, however, needs a concerted effort of all stakeholders (dropouts, parents, teachers, government, religious and community leaders) to ensure that pupils go back to school.

Educational attainment of dropouts

The educational background looks at the academic level attained by the dropouts at the time or year of dropping out of school. The result reveals that out of 100 dropouts, 35.0% dropped out of school at the primary level while 59.0% dropped out at the Junior High School (JHS) level. Only 6.0% of the children dropped out at the Senior High School (SHS) level. This is in conformity with the notion that more students drop out at the basic level than at the other levels. The implication is that there is the need to promote education in the Municipality.

Living arrangements of dropouts

According to Awusabo-Asare, Biddlecom, Kumi-Kyereme and Patterson (2006), living arrangement for children has a greater influence on their access to resources for educational purposes. All things being equal, adolescents living with both parents will have access to more resources than those living with non-relatives as house help or apprentices, or those who reside as household heads themselves (Awusabo-Asare *et al*, 2006). As a result an attempt was made to investigate the living arrangements of the drop outs. These living arrangements range from living with biological parents, grandparents and other relations such as uncles, aunts or older siblings, to living with unrelated members of the household as house help or apprentices, to residing in their own households in a marital union.

Table 4 presents the living arrangements of the dropouts selected for the study. It could be seen that about only a quarter of them (24.0%) were living with their biological parents while about three-quarters (76.0%) were not living with their parents.

Out of the drop outs living with their biological parents, only 16.7% of them are staying with both parents (overall percentage of 4.0%). Compared with the living arrangements of the students, it could be seen that there is a vast difference as 38.5% of the students live with both parents. Fifty-eight percent are living with only their mothers while 25.0% are living with their fathers only. The implication of this finding is that most of the people who drop out of school are being catered for by single-parents. For this reason the financial burden of the children and the family as a whole falls on one person and that when he/she encounters financial difficulties it will lead to a child

dropping out of school. Additionally, the children may not have the required parental control and care, and have to drop out of school.

Table 4:

Living arrangements of dropouts

Living arrangements	Frequency	Percent
Staying with biological parents (24%)		
Both	4	4.0
Mother only	14	14.0
Father only	6	6.0
Not staying with biological parents (76%)		
Grandparents	12	12.0
Brother/Sister	11	11.0
Uncle/Auntie	2	2.0
Self	13	13.0
Not related	38	38.0
Total	76	76.0
Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2008

Out of the children who are not living with their biological parents, half of them are living with people they are not related to biologically. Seventeen percent are living with other relatives while 15.8% and 14.5% of them are living with grandparents and siblings respectively. Approximately 17% of the dropouts are either residing in their own households in a marital union or residing as household heads themselves. This also has a serious implication for dropout as there is usually a low level of control over the children's activities, especially those living with grandparents.

Length of time out of school

To know and understand the intensity of drop out in the selected communities, one needs to also know the length of time a dropout has been out of school. The study revealed that the majority of the dropouts (75.0%) had been out of school for the past three years whereas 23.0% had been out of school between four (4) and six (6) years. Only two of them have been out of school for over seven years.

Expectation of the highest level of education

Educational aspirations of children play a role in their decision to drop out or stay in school (Vermont Agency of Human Services, 1999). For this reason the study tried to find out the educational aspirations of the dropouts. It was found out that the majority of them 47.0% aspired for a higher level of education, which was defined to include Teacher Training College, Nurses Training College, Polytechnic and University. Forty-five percent (45.0%) aspired to complete Senior High/Technical/Vocational while seven percent (7.0%) of them just wanted to complete Basic education (i.e. JHS).

The implication here is that, all things being equal, most of the children had higher expectation of educational attainment and that any efforts to send them back to school by the government or any NGO would yield positive results. This is reinforced by the fact that as high as 62.0% of them had the intention of going back to school if given the opportunity. However, a substantial proportion (38.0%) of the drop outs indicated that they did not have any plans to go back to school.

Present occupation of dropouts

Young people's perceptions of the economic opportunities available to them also play a role in their decision to drop out or stay in school. Dropouts often have lower occupational aspirations than their peers (Vermont Agency of Human Services, 1999). When asked if they have received any vocational training after dropping out of school, only 27% answered in the affirmative. These vocational trainings range from carpentry and masonry through dressmaking and hairdressing to shoe making

Even though 73% of them had not received any vocational training, the study revealed that 96% of them are doing some work that earns them some money. Of these, 53% indicated that they personally decide how the money is spent while 25% indicated that their parents decide how their money is spent.

Research Question 3:

What are the reasons for irregular school attendance?

This study sought to find out reasons for irregular attendance in the Techiman Township. Since Awusabo-Asare *et al* (2006) have indicated that living arrangement for children has a greater influence on their access to resources for educational purposes, the study attempted to investigate the living arrangements of the students. The results indicate that 38.5% of them are living with both parents, 25.4% are living with their mother only while 15.4% are living with the father only. About 21% are living with other relatives, who include siblings, aunties/uncles and grand parents.

In all, 79.3% of the students are living with either their father or mother or even both. This in part explains why they are still in school because

they might have access to more resources than if they were living with other relatives.

Students' attendance at school

It is a fact that poor attendance predicts dropping out of school; chronic absenteeism can have a negative impact on the student and school. Students who are not in school are not learning and are not being adequately prepared to be successful in school and in life. Research on truancy and absenteeism suggests that students with better attendance score higher on achievement tests than their more frequently absent peers (Lamdin, 1996). The study sought to find out regularity of school attendance from the student respondents. It found out that 91.5% of the students attended school regularly. The 8.5% who do not attend school regularly cited financial problems and inadequate materials as the main reasons for their inability to attend school on a regular basis.

Wigg (1994) is of the view that children who have dropped out of school in one way or the other try to entice some of their classmates into the street. Similarly, children, under the influence of their friends, may also absent themselves from school. The results of the study indicated that 70% of the students indicated that their friends attend school very often while 15.4% are of the view that their friends attend school quite often. Approximately 9% said their friends attend school often whereas 6.1% said their friends do not attend school often.

Since dropping out of school starts with chronic absenteeism (Lamdin, 1996), students were asked to indicate how often they leave school with their friends before school closes. Table 5 shows that even though the majority of the students (53.1%) indicated that they do not leave school before closing

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time, a substantial proportion (25.4%) accepted that they very often leave school before school closes for the day.

Cumulatively, 47.3% of the students indicated that they often leave school before closing time. This, indeed, has a very serious consequence on school attendance and hence children's academic performance.

Table 5:

Frequency at which students leave school before the end of the school day

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very often	33	25.4	25.4
Quite often	21	16.1	41.9
Often	7	5.4	47.3
Not often	69	53.1	100
Total	130	100.0	

Source: Fieldwork, 2008

With this high proportion of students leaving school before closing time and its associated consequences on attendance and performance, an attempt was made to find out from students the reaction of their parents or guardians when they did not go to school. The result showed that 89.2% said that their parents became worried. Approximately 8.5% indicated that their parents were indifferent about it while 2.3% said their parents became happy. These students cited their assistance to their parents' business as the reason for their parents' indifference and happiness.

Parental care and concern about children's education

Parents need to exercise some control and care about their children because children in self-care present some concerns for parents and communities. According to research evidence, children at home alone reportedly are more bored, lonely, isolated (Long & Long, 1982), have lower academic achievement, are less socially adjusted (Woods, 1972), and are more vulnerable to people from the outside taking advantage of them (Kraizer, Witte, Fryer & Miyoshi, 1990). Limited community support and complex family characteristics compound these elements to create vulnerability in school-age children. In order to understand how schools are performing, it is necessary to listen to parents' views. The goals of education as formulated by educational institutions need to correspond as much as possible with those that parents hold for their children and those that students see for themselves.

Subsequently, an attempt was made to explore parents' knowledge on their wards' school attendance and activities. Expectedly, 85.4% of them indicated their wards attend school very often while only 3.8% know that their wards do not attend school often (See Table 6).

With the knowledge about how often their wards attend school, parents were asked if the close friends of their wards also attend school regularly. It was found out that 76.9% of the parents know that the close friends of their wards attend school regular. This is an indication that their wards will not be subjected to absenteeism associated with peer influence. About 21% of the parents do not know whether the close friends of their wards attend school regularly whereas 2.3% said the close friends of their wards do not go to school regularly.

Table 6:

Frequency of school attendance

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very often	111	85.4
Quite often	8	6.2
Often	6	4.6
Not often	5	3.8
Total	130	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2008

Drawing from Wigg's (1994) assertion that children who have dropped out of school in one way or the other try to entice some of their classmate into the street, one is tempted to suggest that parents should keep a close eye on their wards. This is because children whose close friends do not attend school regularly are more likely to be truant.

Even though 85.4% of the parents said that they know their wards' attendance in school, only 44.6% visit their wards at school very often. Twenty-six percent visit their wards quite often while 17.7% do not often visit their wards at school. Visits made by parents to schools are a way of monitoring their wards attendance and performance as well as building a cordial relationship between them and the teachers. This is because a number of current studies corroborate the value of strong school-family-community partnerships. It has been proven that strong partnerships lead to improved student performance, improved student attitudes regarding school, and increased parental support of the education system (Bae, 2001; Smith, 2001; Demikat, 1999).

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One area where parents can contribute to their wards academic performance is by ensuring that their wards perform their home work before going back to school. This is more important for children at the basic level. As a result the researcher made an attempt to find out how often parents insist that their wards do their home work. Table 7 indicates that a little over two-thirds of the parents said that they very often insist that their wards do their home work while 7.7% indicated that they do that quite often. Ten percent do that often whereas 3.8% indicated that they do not often insist that their wards do their home work.

Table 7:

Frequency of parents ensuring that their wards do their home work

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very often	102	78.5	78.5
Quite often	10	7.7	86.2
Often	13	10.0	96.2
Not often	5	3.8	100.0
Total	130	100.0	

Source: Fieldwork, 2008

This finding is in accordance with the literature because according to Rumberger, Ghatak, Poulos, Ritter, & Dornbusch (1990), students who drop out of school report that their parents rarely attended school events or helped with homework. Studies investigating family practice have suggested that not all parental involvement in activities are associated with attendance (Lee & Smith, 1994) and that parental involvement that requires checking homework

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and reading with a child is associated with improved report card grades, achievement scores, and subject-specific skills (Asomaning, Argarwal, Apt, Grieco & Turner, 1994; Hallam, 1994; Palme, 1993).

Parents' views on the causes of poor school attendance

There are various issues that serve as indicators for low school attendance and subsequently high school drop out. A number of these issues were investigated in the study. Parents of students in school were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with some statement that relate to attendance and school dropout. The results have been presented in Table 8. It could be seen from the Table that 76.2% of the parents agree to the statement that students with low school attendance are influenced by their peers (close friends) who may also have low attendance. About 80% also agreed that parents tend to monitor the attendance of their wards and for that matter 51.5% of them disagreed with the statement that children's absenteeism from school is always condoned by parents.

Again, there was a general agreement with the statement that parents or guardians see to it that their wards do their home work as 84% agree to the statement. Parental involvement as an element of an effective school takes place when parents monitor and comment on their children's homework, communicate with teachers and feel as valued contributors who are welcome in the school.

The majority of them (90%), on the other hand, agreed that a teacher's performance has great influence on student's attendance and drop outs. As a result 83.8% strongly agree that students who do not attend school regularly find most of the school's subjects taught difficult and uninteresting. It was also

realised that over 70% of the respondents are in agreement with the statement that students who absent themselves from school find school boring. Of course, some of the parents were once students and even drop outs and for that matter cannot be faulted when they think that if students find school boring they tend to be truant and eventually drop out of school.

Table 8:

Parents' level of agreement with some issues on attendance

Issues on attendance	Level of agreement (%)			
	A	DK	D	N
Students with low school attendance are influenced by their peers (close friends)	76.2	6.1	17.7	130
Student's school attendance is monitored by their parents	80.8	5.4	13.8	130
Students who do not attend school regularly are condoned by parents or guardians	46.2	2.3	51.5	130
Parents who involve wards in their trading businesses consider the business more important and profitable than schooling	52.3	4.6	43.1	130
Parents or guardians whose wards have low school attendance do not attend PTA meetings	60.0	10.0	30.0	130
Students who absent themselves from school find school boring	73.9	9.2	16.9	130
Students who do not attend school regularly find most of the school's subjects taught difficult and uninteresting	83.8	4.6	11.6	130
Teacher's performance has great influence on student's attendance	90.0	1.5	8.5	130
Parents or guardians see to it that their wards do their home work	84.0	3.7	12.3	130

A = Agree   DK = Don't Know   D = Disagree   N = Total respondents

Source: Fieldwork, 2008

With the above issues in mind, parents were asked to indicate other factors that affect their wards school attendance. Out of the 33 parents who said their wards do not attend school regularly, 42.4% cited sickness of their wards as a hindrance while 30.3% indicated that financial problems are threatening the attendance of their wards (Table 9).

Table 9:

Factors affecting parents' wards' school attendance

Reasons	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Sickness	14	42.4	42.4
Financial problems	10	30.3	72.7
Parental control	5	15.2	87.9
Poor academic performance	1	3.0	90.9
School environment	3	9.1	100.0
Total	33	100.0	

Source: Fieldwork, 2008

Research Question 4:

What are the reasons for students dropping out of school before completing the basic level?

Having investigated the reasons for irregular school attendance in the study area, the researcher sought to find out the causes of pupils dropping out of school. Views were collected from the drop outs themselves, parents whose wards are in school as well as the teachers. These are discussed in the following subheadings.

Views from the drop outs

There were a number of reasons that came out from the study as to the causes of dropping out of school from the perspectives of the drop outs. These reasons are indicated in Table 10. It can be seen from Table 10 that the most common reason was the lack of school materials (47%), followed by pregnancy (20%). This supports the literature's stance on the role of early marriage and child-bearing on dropout (Obeng, 2002; Akuffo 1987; Yeboah 1993a, 1993b) as one of the reasons for girls dropping out of school. The least common reasons were teachers' dislike of the pupils (1%) and work load at school (3%).

Table 10:

Reason(s) for dropping out of school

Reasons	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lack of school materials	47	47.0	47.0
Got pregnant	20	20.0	67.0
Personal illness	18	18.0	85.0
Not interested in school	6	6.0	91.0
Parent sick/died	5	5.0	96.0
Work	3	3.0	99.0
Teacher did not like me	1	1.0	100
Total	100	100.0	

Source: Fieldwork, 2008

Views from parents whose children are in school

Research has shown that multiple factors are associated with dropping out and that dropping out of school is a long-term process of disengagement that occurs over time and begins in the earliest grades (Obeng, 2002). After indicating the number of dropouts they had seen in their communities, parents were asked to indicate the reasons that might have caused the drop out. A number of reasons were advanced to be the causes of school dropout as shown in Table 11. A number of the parents (34.6%) were of the view that some pupils drop out of school due to broken homes or financial problems while 23.1% indicated that children drop out of school due to pregnancy or peer influence. About 19% attributed it to disobedience on the part of the children whereas 11.5% said children drop out of school because of their poor academic performance.

Table 11:

Causes of drop out as perceived by parents

Causes	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Broken homes/Financial problems	45	34.6	34.6
Pregnancy/Peer influence	30	23.1	57.7
Disobedience on the part of students	25	19.2	76.9
Poor academic performance	15	11.5	88.4
Poor school environment	7	5.4	93.8
Other	8	6.2	100.0
Total	130	100.0	

Source: Fieldwork, 2008

Views from teachers

The reasons for pupils dropping out of school were also corroborated from the teachers' and head teachers' perspective. They particularly mentioned peer influence, low academic performance and teenage pregnancy as the major causes of drop out in the Municipality. These causes are also in accordance with reasons stated in the literature (Obeng, 2002; Camfed, 1994; Asomaning *et al*., 1994; Hallam, 1994; Palme, 1993; Fleuret *et al.* 1992; Brock and Cammish, 1991; and Bledsoe, 1990). Specifically, Bogenschneider, Small and Riley, (1990) identified poor parental monitoring, uninvolved parents, and unclear expectations by other significant adults to be risk factors for children. These factors coupled with low socio-economic status, low neighbourhood attachment, and community disorganization place children at risk of school failure and social turmoil.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter is divided into three parts. The first part presents a summary of the major findings of the study, the second part discusses the conclusions drawn from the study and the third part deals with the recommendations based on the findings.

Summary

This study sought to find out the factors that affect school attendance among JHS students in the Techiman Municipality. The study adopted a descriptive research design and used both qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect data. In all, 380 people were selected for the study; 130 JHS Two students, 130 parents, 100 dropouts, 10 teachers and 10 head teachers. Simple random sampling was used to select the students while convenience sampling was used to select the drop outs. However, purposive sampling was used to select the parents, teachers and the head teachers for the study.

Questionnaires were the main instrument used to collect data for the study and were administered to the head teachers, teachers, students, parents and drop outs. Simple frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the data according to the four research questions formulated to guide the study.

Summary of study findings

The following findings emerged from the study;

Trends of school enrolment and attendance in the selected schools

The study found out that the schools selected for the study have large classes which the teachers indicated that it affects children's school attendance since there is no room for individual attention. Even though, most of the students attend school regularly, a substantial proportion indicated that they often leave school before closing time.

Generally, it was found that school attendance in the Techiman Municipality was quite good though on market days the attendance is mostly irregular. It was also found that the educational level of the parents of the children were low, which has a serious repercussions on children's educational aspirations and hence their present school attendance.

Background characteristics of drop outs

It was found out from the study that more females drop out of school than males. While 79.3% of the students were living either with one of their biological parents or both, only 24% percent of the drop outs were living with their biological parents. This has been known by many researchers to affect children's school attendance since they lack resources needed for schooling.

Since children's educational aspirations affect their attendance, the drop outs were asked to indicate the highest education they wish to achieve. Nearly half of the respondents (47.0%) aspired for a higher level of education, which was defined to include Teacher Training College, Nurses Training College, Polytechnic and University. Forty-five percent (45.0%) aspired to

complete Senior High/Technical/Vocational while seven percent of them just wanted to complete Basic education (i.e. JHS).

Reasons for irregular school attendance

Irregular school attendance was attributed to a number of factors. Most prominent were teachers' performance at school (90%), children's difficulty in understanding what is taught at school (84%), peer influence (76.2%), boring nature of school activities (73.9%), and parents' disinterest in the wards' education (60%). Other reasons advanced for irregular school attendance were sickness, financial problems and unfriendly school environment.

Causes of absenteeism and drop outs

A number of reasons were advanced to be the causes of school dropout. Nearly half of the dropouts said they dropped out of school because they lacked school materials while others got pregnant. Parents were of the view that pupils drop out of school due to broken homes or financial problems.

Teachers and head teachers attributed the causes of absenteeism and drop outs to peer influence, low academic performance and teenage pregnancy. Additionally, there was a general consensus on the part of the teachers that the market days of Techiman (Wednesdays-Fridays) of every week have negative impact on children's attendance. To them, attendance drops drastically during these days.

Solutions to absenteeism and drop out

It was found out that close to half of the parents interviewed were of the view that parents should be more responsible and supportive of their wards while others suggested that there should be intensive counselling for both students and parents. The head teachers and the teachers also suggested that more scholarships (given by the government and the community) should be awarded to needy students. They however, added that parents should be advised to take keen interest in their wards' education and monitor the academic performance of their wards. More specifically, the teachers indicated that the school has instituted some strategies to deal with the issue. These include punishing truants and rewarding good students, checking regular attendance, counselling both parents and students on the importance of education, and visiting the homes of truants and discussing it with their parents. Other strategies include teachers being punctual in class, using their instructional time very well and making their lessons more interesting to students. These, they said, would help reduce the incidence of low school attendance and dropout in the municipality.

Conclusions

This study has shown that school attendance and dropping out of school may be affected by a combination of factors. Notable among them are; low education background of parents, financial problems, teenage pregnancy, peer influence, as well as disobedience on the part of the students. The low educational background of the parents has made some of them indifferent when their wards absent themselves from school or drop out of school. Some even see it as a blessing in disguise, because it lessens their financial burden.

However, in most cases, parents may have positive attitude towards children's education but financial constraints may deter their capability to cater for their needs. This implies that few children can be sent to and retained in school.

Most of the children with low attendance in school are under peer group influence which eventually leads them to teenage pregnancy. Drop outs find working in the markets more lucrative than attending school. This was due to the financial problems they face during their school days. Most of them were, nonetheless, willing to go back to school if the necessary assistance is given.

It is anticipated that while the insights provided by this study will provide a source of information for educators, parents, and NGOs interested in the well being of school children, it will also be of use to social workers and social psychologists, especially, family counsellors.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations have been put forward for consideration.

1. In the first place, schools can entrust one or more teachers on part-time basis with 'student affairs'. These teachers are responsible for contacts with the parents in the case of truancy or social problems. In the basic schools, teachers have fairly good contacts with the students' homes, as they live in the same vicinity. To make this effective and efficient, there should be regular meetings between parents and teachers (PTA meetings) to discuss issues relating to school attendance and other related issues such as drop out rates.

2. Secondly, more schools should be built and equipped to reduce the number of students per class so that teachers would be able to attend to individual student's needs.

3. Thirdly, parents should be educated on the benefits of formal education. This could be done through lectures, film shows, churches and other religious organization. When this is done, it will enlighten the parents not only to send their children to school but also to ensure their retention.

4. The Techiman Municipal Assembly should make funds available to children from needy backgrounds whose schooling is threatened by the inability to buy books and other related materials. This laudable step can be taken through the establishment of educational funds for the needy.

5. Strict monitoring of school-going children should be done by both teachers and parents especially, during the market days in Techiman. This will enable them to introduce corrective measures to reduce the number of absentees during the market days.

6. Job avenues should be created by government and other private partners in the municipality to increase income level of parents. This will help the people to provide the basic educational needs of their children.

7. Finally, dropouts could also be helped through non-formal education and support in vocational training.

Suggestions for future studies

According to Shillinglaw and Thomas (1998), research is conducted partly so that new problems are discovered. Accordingly, this study identified the following avenues for further exploration in the Techiman Municipality.

1. It is recommended that a comprehensive study is conducted on how irregular school attendance in the Municipality affects school performance. This will lead to a complete understanding of the problems the stakeholders face in ensuring quality education in the Municipality.

2. Again, a comparative study on the effects of markets on school attendance in several market centres will help to generalise the findings of such a study.

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**INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND
ADMINISTRATION
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

FACTORS AFFECTING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF JSS STUDENTS
IN TECHIMAN MUNICIPALITY

A student of the above mentioned department in the faculty of education of university of Cape Coast is conducting a study on factors affecting school attendance of JSS student in the Techiman Municipality. This questionnaire that you are being asked to complete, forms an important part of the study. You are kindly requested to read through the items and respond to them as frankly and objectively as possible. The study is purely for academic purposes and you are assured of the confidentiality of your response.

INSTRUCTIONS: From your own objective point of view, please tick or provide the response that represents each item.

1. Sex   Male [   ]   Female[   ]

SECTION A: VIEWS ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE
Please respond to the following questions by ticking the response that best suits your opinion.
SA = Strongly agree   A = Agree   DK = Don't know
D = Disagree   SD = strongly disagree

	Statement	SA	A	DK	D	SD
2.	Students with low school attendance are influenced by their peers (close friends)					
3.	Student's school attendance is monitored by their parents					
4.	Students who do not attend school regularly are condoned by parents or guardians					
5.	Parents who involve their wards in their trading businesses consider the business more important and profitable than schooling					
6.	Parents or guardians whose wards have low school attendance do not attend PTA meeting					
7.	Students who absent themselves from school find school boring					
8	Students who do not attend school regularly find most of the school's subjects taught difficult and uninteresting					
9	Students whose parents find it difficult to provide school materials attend school regularly.					
10	Teacher's performance has great influence on student's attendance					
11	Parents or guardians see to it that their wards do their home work					

12. Do you consider your classes to be too large? Yes [   ]   No [   ]

13. If yes, does large size have effect on student's attendance?

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

14. Does school attendance drop during the market days (Wednesday to Friday) in Techiman? Yes [   ]   No [   ]

15. If yes, what strategies have been put in place to monitor school attendance during this period?

....

....

....

16. How do you use your influence to solve student's low attendance problem?

....

....

....

17. Does the school atmosphere encourage student's attendance?

....

....

....

18. What other factors lead to poor student's attendance?

....

....

....

SECTION B: VIEWS ON DROP OUTS

19. Do your students drop out from this school? Yes [   ]   No [   ]

20. How   many   students   have   dropped   out   of school?....................................

21. What is the distribution of drop outs?

More boys [   ]   More girls [   ]

22. What are the reasons why students drop out of school?

....

....

....

23. In your opinion, in what ways can the incidence of drop out be reduced or stopped?

....

....

....

Thank you very much for your cooperation

**INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND
ADMINISTRATION
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

FACTORS AFFECTING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF JSS STUDENTS
IN TECHIMAN MUNICIPALITY

A student of the above mentioned department in the faculty of education of university of Cape Coast is conducting a study on factors affecting school attendance of JSS student in the Techiman Municipality. This questionnaire that you are being asked to complete, forms an important part of the study. You are kindly requested to read through the items and respond to them as frankly and objectively as possible. The study is purely for academic purposes and you are assured of the confidentiality of your response.

INSTRUCTIONS: From your own objective point of view, please tick or provide the response that represents each item.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Sex: Male [   ]   Female [   ]
2. Age: Below 13 [   ]   13-16 [   ]   above 16 [   ]
3. Who takes care of your education?   Father [   ]   Mother [   ]
   Guardian [   ]
4. What is the educational level of the one who takes care of you?
   None [   ]   Primary [   ]   JSS/Middle [   ]
   SSS/Sec [   ]   Voc/Tech/Com [   ]   Tertiary [   ]
5. What is the occupation of the one who takes care of you?
   ....

SECTION B: VIEWS ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

6. Do you attend school regularly? Yes [   ]   No [   ]

7. If not what are the main reason?

   ....

   ....

8. Do your close friends attend school regularly? Yes [   ]   No [   ]

9. If yes, how often?

   Very often [   ]   Quite often [   ]

   Often [   ]   Not often [   ]

10. If not, give reasons why your close friends do not attend school regularly?

11. How often do you leave school with your friends before school closes?

    Very often [   ]   Quite often [   ]

    Often [   ]   Not often [   ]

12. How do your friends' attitudes affect your attendance?

    ....

    ....

13. Do your parents ask you to help them in their business?   Yes [   ]

           No [   ]

14. If yes, do your parents ask you to help them in their business during school ours?

    Yes [   ]   No [   ]

15. If yes, how do you help them?

    ....

    ....

16. State your parents/guardian's reaction when you fail to attend school?

    Happy [   ]   Unhappy [   ]   Indifferent [   ]

17. Do your parents/guardian attend PTA meeting?

    Yes [   ]   No [   ]

18. If not, why don't they attend?

    ....

    ....

19. How do you find school activities?   Interesting [   ]   Boring [   ]

20. How often are asked by teachers to go and collect school materials from your parents/guardian?

Very often [   ]   Quite often [   ]

Often [   ]   Not often [   ]

21. Does your teachers' attitude affect your attendance at school?

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

22. If yes, how?

....

....

23. Does the school environment affect your attendance?

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

24. If yes, how?

....

....

25. Are there other factors that affect your attendance?

....

....

SECTION C: VIEWS ON DROP OUTS

26. Do you of any student dropping out of school? Yes [   ]   No [   ]

27. How many students have you seen dropped out of school?.....................................

28. If yes, what are the reasons why they drop out?

....

....

....

29. In your opinion, in what ways can the incidence of drop out be reduced or stopped?

....

....

....

Thank you very much for your cooperation

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS/GUARDIAN

FACTORS AFFECTING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF JSS STUDENTS IN TECHIMAN MUNICIPALITY

A student of the above mentioned department in the faculty of education of university of Cape Coast is conducting a study on factors affecting school attendance of JSS student in the Techiman Municipality. This questionnaire that you are being asked to complete, forms an important part of the study. You are kindly requested to read through the items and respond to them as frankly and objectively as possible. The study is purely for academic purposes and you are assured of the confidentiality of your response.

INSTRUCTIONS: From your own objective point of view, please tick or provide the response that represents each item.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Sex: Male [   ]   Female [   ]
2. Age: 20-30 [   ]   31-40 [   ]   41 and above [   ]
3. Marital status: Married [   ]   Divorced [   ]   Widowed [   ]
4. Educational level
   None [   ]   Primary [   ]   JSS/Middle [   ]
   SSS/Sec [   ]   Voc/Tech/Com [   ]   Tertiary [   ]
5. Present occupation..

SECTION B: VIEWS ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

6. How often does your ward attend school?

   Very often [   ]   Quite often [   ]

   Often [   ]   Not often [   ]

7. During which hours do your wards come home from school?

   During school hours [   ]   After school hours [   ]   Anytime [   ]

8. Do your wards close friends attend school regularly?

   Yes [   ]   No [   ]   Don't know [   ]

9. Do you know your ward's attendance at school?   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

10. How often do you visit your ward at school?

    Very often [   ]   Quite often [   ]

    Often [   ]   Not often [   ]

11. Do you insist that your help you in your work during school hours?

    Yes [   ]   No [   ]

12. If yes, in which work do they help you?

    ....

    ....

13. How often do they help you in the work?

    Very often [   ]   Quite often [   ]

    Often [   ]   Not often [   ]

14. What is your reaction when your wards do not attend school regularly?

    ....

    ....

15. How often do you insist that your wards do their homework?

    Very often [   ]   Quite often [   ]

    Often [   ]   Not often [   ]

16. Do you attend PTA meeting?   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

17. If yes, how often do you attend?

    Very often [   ]   Quite often [   ]

    Often [   ]   Not often [   ]

18. If no, what are your reason(s) for not attending?

    ....

    ....

    ....

19. Are you able to provide your ward's school materials e.g. books and uniform when they are asked to bring?   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

Please respond to the following questions by ticking the response that best suits your opinion.

SA = Strongly agree   A = Agree   DK = Don't know

D = Disagree   SD = strongly disagree

	Statement	SA	A	DK	D	SD
21.	Students with low school attendance are influenced by their peers (close friends)					
22.	Student's school attendance is monitored by their parents					
23.	Students who do not attend school regularly are condoned by parents or guardians					
24.	Parents who involve their wards in their trading businesses consider the business more important and profitable than schooling					
25.	Parents or guardians whose wards have low school attendance do not attend PTA meeting					
26.	Students who absent themselves from school find school boring					
27	Students who do not attend school regularly find most of the school's subjects taught difficult and uninteresting					
28	Students whose parents find it difficult to provide school materials attend school regularly.					
29	Teacher's performance has great influence on student's attendance					
30	Parents or guardians see to it that their wards do their home work					

31. Are there other factors that affect your ward's attendance?

....

....

SECTION C: VIEWS ON DROP OUTS

32. Do you of any student dropping out of school? Yes [   ]   No [   ]

33. How many students have you seen dropped out of school?.....................................

34. If yes, what are the reasons why they drop out?

....

....

....

35. In your opinion, in what ways can the incidence of drop out be reduced or stopped?

....

....

....

Thank you very much for your cooperation

**INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND
ADMINISTRATION
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEADTEACHERS

FACTORS AFFECTING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF JSS STUDENTS
IN TECHIMAN MUNICIPALITY

A student of the above mentioned department in the faculty of education of university of Cape Coast is conducting a study on factors affecting school attendance of JSS student in the Techiman Municipality. This questionnaire that you are being asked to complete, forms an important part of the study. You are kindly requested to read through the items and respond to them as frankly and objectively as possible. The study is purely for academic purposes and you are assured of the confidentiality of your response.

SECTION A: VIEWS ON ATTENDANCE

1. What is the total enrolment of the school?...
2. How many students are in JSS 2? ....
3. Do you consider your classes to be too large? Yes [   ]   No [   ]
4. If yes, does large size have effect on student's attendance?

    Yes [   ]   No [   ]
5. Does school attendance drop during the market days (Wednesday to Friday) in Techiman? Yes [   ]   No [   ]
6. If yes, what strategies have been put in place to monitor school attendance during this period?

    ....

    ....

    ....

7. In your opinion, what are the factors responsible for poor school attendance?

    i.   ....

    ii.   ....

    iii.   ....

    iv.   ....

    v.   ....

8. Apart from the attendance register, is there a way of identifying particular students who are fond of absenting themselves from school?

        Yes [ ]   No [ ]

9. If yes, how do you do this?

....

....

10. What roles do teachers play to improve school attendance?

....

....

....

11. Do you think the performance of teachers affect students' attendance?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

12. Does the school environment affect students' attendance?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

13. If yes, how does it affect school attendance?

....

....

....

14. Are parents cooperating in your administrative strategies to improve school attendance?   Yes [ ]   No [ ]

15. What specific activities do you do to entice or motivate students to attend school regularly?

....

....

....

16. What disciplinary action do you take on students who are irregular at school?

....

....

....

Please respond to the following questions by ticking the response that best suits your opinion.

SA = Strongly agree   A = Agree   DK = Don't know

D = Disagree   SD = strongly disagree

	Statement	SA	A	DK	D	SD
17.	Students with low school attendance are influenced by their peers (close friends)					
18.	Student's school attendance is monitored by their parents					
19.	Students who do not attend school regularly are condoned by parents or guardians					
20.	Parents who involve their wards in their trading businesses consider the business more important and profitable than schooling					
21.	Parents or guardians whose wards have low school attendance do not attend PTA meeting					
22.	Students who absent themselves from school find school boring					
23	Students who do not attend school regularly find most of the school's subjects taught difficult and uninteresting					
24	Students whose parents find it difficult to provide school materials attend school regularly.					
25	Teacher's performance has great influence on student's attendance					
26	Parents or guardians see to it that their wards do their home work					

24. Are there other factors that affect students' attendance?

   ....

   ....

SECTION B: VIEWS ON DROP OUTS

25. Do you students drop out from this school?   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

26. How   many   students   have   dropped   out   of

   school?.....................................

27. What is the distribution of drop outs?

   More boys [   ]   More girls [   ]

28. What are the reasons why students drop out of school?

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

29. In your opinion, in what ways can the incidence of drop out be reduced

   or stopped?

   ....

   ....

   ....

Thank you very much for your cooperation

<center>**INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND**</center>
<center>**ADMINISTRATION**</center>
<center>**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**</center>

<center>**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SCHOOL DROP-OUTS**</center>

<center>FACTORS AFFECTING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF JSS STUDENTS</center>
<center>IN TECHIMAN MUNICIPALITY</center>

A student of the above mentioned department in the faculty of education of university of Cape Coast is conducting a study on factors affecting school attendance of JSS student in the Techiman Municipality. This questionnaire that you are being asked to complete, forms an important part of the study. You are kindly requested to read through the items and respond to them as frankly and objectively as possible. The study is purely for academic purposes and you are assured of the confidentiality of your response.

1. Sex: Male [   ]   Female [   ]
2. Age: Below 13 [   ]   13-16 [   ]   Above 16 [   ]
3. Are you presently staying with your biological parents?

    Yes [   ]   No [   ]
4. If yes, which of them?

    Both parents [   ]   Mother only [   ]   Father only [   ]
5. If no, what is your relationship with the person you are currently staying with?

    Grand parents [   ]   Brother/Sister [   ]   Uncle/Aunte [   ]

    Adopted/Fostered [   ]   Step parents [   ]   Not related [   ]
6. Have you ever attended school?   Yes [   ]   No [   ]
7. If yes, what is the highest level reached?

    Primary [   ]   JSS [   ]   SSS [   ]   Other (specify).................

8. What was your expectation for highest level of education?

No expectation for further education   [   ] Primary [   ]

JSS [   ]   SSS [   ]   Higher [   ]

9. For how long have you been out of school?...

10. What is your main reason for leaving school?

Lack of school material [   ]

Had enough of formal education [   ]

Got married [   ]

Personal illness [   ]

Work [   ]

Not interested/not a good student [   ]

Parent sick/died [   ]

Teacher didn't like [   ]

Other (specify) [   ]

11. Do you have plans to go back to school?   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

12. Have you received any vocational training after leaving school?

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

13. If yes, what type of training?

....

14. Did you do anything for money in the past two months?

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

15. If yes, who decides how the money is spent?

Self [   ]   Sibling [   ]   Parents [   ]

Other (specify)..

Thank you very much for your cooperation